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PATENT APPLICATION
DOCKET NO. LERS101.02

ABSORBENT MAT ASSEMBLY

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(001) Title: ABSORBENT MAT ASSEMBLY

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(003) RELATED APPLICATION: : This application is a continuation-in-part of application Serial No. 09/837,906, entitled Absorbent Mat Assembly filed April 18, 2001 which is a continuation-in-part of application Serial No. 09/408,090, entitled Absorbent Mat Assembly filed September 29, 1999.

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(004) BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

(005) Technical Field. The present invention relates generally to devices for containing spills and more specifically to a device for containing solvent and petroleum drippings.

15 (006) Background. During the maintenance of engines and other equipment, there is a need to provide a means for the containment of spills of oil and other lubricants, which may occur both accidentally and casually. Similarly, as vehicles and various other motorized equipment age, it is more likely that their engines will begin to drip various engine fluids including oil, grease and antifreeze through
20 various gaskets and seals.

(007) A variety of solutions have been proposed for containing such spills and drippings including devices which provide for an absorbent material to be placed within an impermeable base or tray. Generally speaking, these devices have employed materials containing a cellulose component, an absorbent material. At

25 least one problem with such systems is that, once the absorbent material has been soiled to the point that it no longer functions, disposal becomes a problem. Kenimer, U.S. Patent No. 5,011,007, discloses a reservoir containing garage mat constructed of a semi-rigid material into which one or more unfolded sections of newspaper are placed as an absorbent material. The absorbent material is then covered with a
30 mesh cover and is secured to the mat between the mat top, which is configured

having a tongue formed about its peripheral edge, and the mat itself, which is configured having a separate groove to accept the tongue in a cooperating manner.

At least two limitations exist with this arrangement. First, newspaper is not a particularly absorbent material and following its use it must be disposed of in a

5 manner that is environmentally acceptable. A second limitation is found in the configuration of the top mat and the manner in which it cooperates with the lower mat. This configuration is relatively costly to manufacture and relatively difficult to assemble and disassemble.

(008) Yuhas, U.S. Patent No. 5,549,178, discloses an oil absorbent pad

10 which includes a corrugated cardboard which is stacked on edge to form an absorbent surface. The device also includes an outside peripheral upstanding edge which is coated with oil and waterproofing material to contain oil or other drippings captured by the absorbent pad. This arrangement lacks structural rigidity and, once again, presents limitations in terms of disposing of the device once it has reached a
15 point of saturation.

(009) What is needed is an absorbent mat assembly which is relatively low-cost to manufacture, simple to assemble and which includes a recyclable, washable and reusable absorbent pad.

20 (010) SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

(011) According to the present invention, an absorbent mat assembly includes a petroleum resistant mat including a raised perimeter forming a recess.

The mat may include a bottom panel and a side member attached to and extending
25 from the bottom panel forming the recess. An absorbent pad is placed within the recess and a fluid permeable mesh is placed over the absorbent pad and secured to the petroleum resistant mat using a plurality of connectors. In one preferred

embodiment of the invention, the absorbent mat assembly includes a backflow prevention member.

(012) In the preferred embodiment of the invention, the absorbent pad includes a recyclable, washable and reusable material such as a polypropylene

5 absorbent pad such as those manufactured by the 3M company and sold as "Sorbents". In one embodiment of the invention, the absorbent pad is configured having a woven polypropylene backer and a spun polypropylene liner attached to the woven polypropylene backer. Also, in the preferred embodiment of the invention, the mat is formed of a compound including recycled tires. The fluid
10 permeable mesh may be formed of a solvent or petroleum resistant material such as an extruded polymeric. In one embodiment of the invention, the fluid permeable mesh is formed of a high density polyethylene.

(013) The backflow prevention member may be formed of a sheet of solvent or petroleum resistant sheet material such as an extruded polymeric. The sheet

15 material includes a plurality of perforations of any of a variety of shapes such that a fluid will be transported through the plurality of perforations and will be held below the backflow prevention member by capillary action of the absorbent pad. In addition, the backflow prevention member supports the fluid permeable mesh and distributes forces exerted against the fluid permeable mesh evenly, reducing
20 pressure points along the grid. Because forces exerted against the fluid permeable mesh are more evenly distributed and pressure points along the grid are reduced, fluid that has passed below the backflow prevention member is less likely to be forced back to the upper surface of the grid. Another preferred embodiment of the invention includes a connector strip for attaching two or more absorbent mat
25 assemblies in a side by side or end to end engagement.

(014) Other advantages will become apparent to those skilled in the art from the following detailed description read in conjunction with the appended claims.

(015) BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

Figure 1 is a perspective representational view of one embodiment of an absorbent mat assembly according to the present invention;

5 Figure 2 is an exploded perspective representational view of one embodiment of an absorbent mat assembly according to the present invention;

Figure 3A is an exploded cross-sectional representational view of one embodiment of an absorbent mat assembly according to the present invention;

10 Figure 3B is a cross-sectional representational detail view of one embodiment of an absorbent mat assembly according to the present invention;

Figure 4 is a perspective representational view of one embodiment of an absorbent mat assembly including connector strips;

Figure 5 is a perspective cross-section detail of a connector strip;

15 Figure 6 is a perspective cross-section detail of a connector strip connecting a pair of absorbent mat assembly mats;

Figure 7A is a side cross-sectional representational view of one embodiment of an absorbent mat assembly according to the present invention;

Figure 7B is a cross-sectional representational detail view of one embodiment of an absorbent mat assembly according to the present invention;

20 Figure 8A is an exploded cross-sectional representational view of one embodiment of an absorbent mat assembly according to the present invention; and

Figure 8B is a cross-sectional representational detail view of one embodiment of an absorbent mat assembly according to the present invention.

25 (016) DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

(017) Figure 1 shows a perspective representational view of one embodiment of absorbent mat assembly 10 according to the present invention.

Similarly, Figure 2 depicts an exploded perspective representational view of one embodiment of absorbent mat assembly 10 according to the present invention including mat 11. Absorbent pad 12 is disposable within recess 16 of mat 11.

Backflow prevention member 18 is disposable within recess 16 and is positioned
5 above absorbent pad 12. Mesh 13 is within mesh recess 17 of mat 11. Mesh 13 is attachable to mat 11 and is removably securable to mat 11 by push pins 14. In Figure 2 backflow prevention member 18 is shown including a plurality of slots 31 and a plurality of apertures 32.

(018) Figure 3A is an exploded cross-sectional representational view of one
10 embodiment of absorbent mat assembly 10. Absorbent mat assembly 10 is shown including mat 11. Mat 11 is configured having lip 19. Absorbent pad 12 is disposable within recess 16 of mat 11. Backflow prevention member 18 is disposable within recess 16 and is positioned above absorbent pad 12. Mesh 13 disposable within recess 16 and is positioned under backflow prevention member
15 18. Mesh 13 is attachable to mat 11 and is removably securable to mat 11 by push pins 14.

(019) Figure 3B, is an exploded cross-sectional representational detail view of one embodiment of absorbent mat assembly 10. Absorbent mat assembly 10 is shown including mat 11. Mat 11 is configured having lip 19. Absorbent pad 12 is
20 disposable within recess 16 of mat 11. Backflow prevention member 18 is disposable within recess 16 and is positioned above absorbent pad 12. Mesh 13 disposable within recess 16 and is positioned under backflow prevention member 18. Mesh 13 is attachable to mat 11 and is removably securable to mat 11 by push pins 14 which are insertable within apertures 15.

25 (020) Figure 4 is a perspective representational view of one embodiment of absorbent mat assembly 10, including first, second, third and fourth mats 11A, 11B, 11C and 11D respectively. Mats 11A, 11B, 11C and 11D are joined by connector strips 20A through 20D. As shown in Figure 5, connector strip 20 includes body

portion 21 having first and second mat engaging tabs 22 and 23 and first and second feet 24 and 25. Connector strip 20 is further configured having first mat engaging channel 26 and second mat engaging channel 27.

(021) Figure 6 is a perspective cross-section detail of absorbent mat

5 assembly 10 including connector strip 20A connecting first mat 11A and second mat 11B. Connector strip 20A includes body portion 21A having first and second mat engaging tabs 22A and 23A and first and second feet 24A and 25A. Mats 11A, 11B are shown engaging first mat engaging channel 26A and second mat engaging channel 27A respectively. First mat engaging tab 22A overlaps lip 19A of mat 11A
10 and second mat engaging tab 21B overlaps lip 19B of mat 11B. First foot 24A and second foot 25A extend beneath first mat 11A and 11B respectively.

(022) Figures 7A and 8A show an alternate embodiment of absorbent mat assembly 110 including mat 111, absorbent pad 112 and mesh 113 which is retained in position with regard to mat 111. Mat 111 is formed so as to include
15 recess 135. Absorbent pad 112 is positioned within recess 135. As seen in Figures 7B and 8B, recess 135 includes generally upright side wall 130 which extends about a lower perimeter of recess 135. Recess 135 is also formed including land 132, which in the embodiment shown is formed contiguous to and substantially perpendicular to the substantially upright side wall 130. Mesh 113 is removably
20 attachable to mat 111 by connectors 114. As seen in Figures 7B and 8B, mesh 113 is formed including ear 133 that extends about a periphery of a generally thicker center portion 137 of mat 111. The generally thicker center portion 137 of mesh 113 is characterized by face 131. Connector 114 extends through aperture 136 formed through ear 133 of mesh 113 and into aperture 134 formed in mat 111. When
25 assembled, ear 133 of mesh 113 seats upon land 132 and face 131 of the generally thicker center portion 137 of mat 111 inserts snugly into recess 135 against upright side wall 130. This feature of the invention permits a snug retention of mesh 113

within recess 135 of mat 111 with face 131 of the generally thicker center portion 137 of mat 111 frictionally engaging the upright side wall 130 of recess 135.

(023) While this invention has been described with reference to the described embodiments, this is not meant to be construed in a limiting sense.

- 5 Various modifications to the described embodiments, as well as additional embodiments of the invention, will be apparent to persons skilled in the art upon reference to this description, the drawings and the appended claims. It is therefore contemplated that the appended claims will cover any such modifications or embodiments as fall within the true scope of the invention.

- 10 I claim: